facing a mounting disrespect,
a diminishing patience,
a need for defense.

In passing headlights
I appear to be a criminal.
I'm a weird-looking
muthafucka.
Shaggy green hair sprouts all over me.
My shoulders hunch and bulge. I growl
as blood drips from my glinting fangs.

My mother's flowers are wilting
while I wait.
Our dinner
is cold by now.

I live in a town
where pretense and structure
are devices of cruelty—
a town bewitched
by mirrors, horoscopes,
and blood.

IF I SIMPLY WANTED STATUS, I'D WEAR CALVIN KLEIN

I HAVE NEVER BEEN A SLAVE TO FASHION, SO IT WAS SIMPLY RASH OF me to think I could boldly wear my fireball-red FAG CLUB T-shirt in public and not be confronted. I had purchased the T-shirt in San Francisco without any hesitation whatsoever. In fact, I purchased *two* T-shirts: the red athletic T and the black crewneck, both bearing FAG CLUB prominently displayed in bold white letters stacked across the front. Mind you, the day I wore that T-shirt all over Washington, D.C., I was truly voguing. I was featuring heavy transgression in a town of government secrets, political intrigue, and kinky sex.

The confrontation did not occur downtown or on the bus or subway as I thought it might. I was in my neighborhood, Mt. Pleasant, when it happened. People I had encountered on the buses and downtown sidewalks didn't challenge me. They were surprised by the T-shirt, as indicated by the number of double takes it received.

The red was tinted with a little orange and was very eye-catching in the summer sun. By the time I returned to Mt. Pleasant later that afternoon, I had completely forgotten I was wearing it. I had never flaunted my sexuality so immediately to so many. I had never communicated my sexual identity so intentionally as I did by choosing to wear that FAG CLUB T-shirt in public.

I needed to get a few things for dinner before going home, so I stopped at the supermarket a few blocks from my apartment. As the market doors swooshed behind me and I passed through the entrance turnstile, a young boy screamed out, "Look, everybody, there's a faggot in the store!" You